

Helping Clean Up

*Alaska BLM responds
to oil spill with
resources, people*

*by Dave Vickery
Alaska Public Affairs Chief*



Helicopter deploys an oil boom to protect a fish hatchery in Prince William Sound. Photo by Irene Collie, AK Civil Air Patrol.

When the massive supertanker Exxon Valdez slid onto the rocks of Bligh Reef in the calm blue waters of Alaska's Prince William Sound in the early hours of March 24, nearly 10 million gallons of Prudhoe Bay crude oil gushed from the belly of the ship.

The resulting chain of events spread faster than the oil slick itself. BLM was caught up in responding to the disaster and faced a sudden, major demand on people and resources.

The crude oil that had flowed 800 miles down the Trans-Alaska Pipeline, then into the Exxon Valdez, gushed from ruptured tanks into the clear waters. After the initial reactions of disbelief and shock,

BLM was quickly called on to assist in the response effort.

The BLM Pipeline Monitoring staff immediately reviewed the oil spill contingency equipment and supplies that were in place along the full route of the Alyeska pipeline and requested that the company replace materials that had been used for the initial spill response. Alyeska complied with the request and had all contingency material replaced by



Sea otters receive attention at the cleaning center in Valdez. Photo by D. Vickery.

BLM Helps Cleanup of Oil Spill

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March 31.

At the same time, close coordination with sister Interior Department agencies was established and other work got under way.

The BLM Alaska State Office provided immediate support to the Interior Department Office of Environmental Project Review, headed by Paul Gates, in Anchorage. Gates is the official DOI member of the Regional Response Team (RRT) that has overall control of the spill response. Employees from the state office were assigned to the OEPR headquarters and sent to the RRT center in Valdez.

By Tuesday, March 28, BLM had been in contact with Coast Guard and Exxon officials and responded to a request to mobilize fire crews and equipment. A Type I Interagency Incident Command team, under the direction of BLM's Dave Libersbach, was called out. Libersbach had to cut short a meeting in Reno, Nevada, to return to Alaska and was sent to Valdez.

By Wednesday, March 29, Exxon and State of Alaska officials decided not to use the fire crews immediately, since some local opposition had surfaced, but wanted to be able to call on BLM for logistical

support.

It became apparent that the spreading oil slick, which was causing heavy damage to wildlife and lands in Prince William Sound, would likely move toward the Gulf of Alaska, and potentially affect the Kenai Peninsula shoreline, including Kenai Fjords National Park.

The National Park Service requested that the incident command team be established in Seward, Alaska, to help with resource assessment and protective measures. Libersbach and his group of experts arrived in Seward and established a Multi-

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Oil Spill (Continued)

Agency Coordination group (MAC) that included the State of Alaska, Kenai Borough, City of Seward, National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and BLM.

Libersbach, who was incident commander at the massive Storm Creek fire in Yellowstone Park last summer, began plans to defend Kenai Fjords National Park. Under the direction of NPS, Libersbach explained his task as a "mission to find out where the marine wildlife and sea birds are, then set priorities so that the oil that kills them can be contained."

Kenai Fjords is a 660-thousand-acre park, with more than 600 miles of shoreline on the eastern edge of the Kenai Peninsula. It contains huge bird rookeries and is home to a tremendous number of marine mammals including sea otters, sea lions and whales. Important salmon spawning streams are part of the critical habitat of the park.

Once the team was in place and working, plans to identify key resources were developed. Boats were hired, and biologists and scientists were dispatched to the remote areas.

Nearly the full resources of BLM's Alaska Fire Service, headquartered in Fairbanks, were put into play. Logistical support for the MAC operation in Se-

the mouth of Resurrection Bay, about 8 miles out of Seward, and at Barwell Island.

During the second full week of the response, BLM assistance was requested by the Alaska Department of Emergency Services (DES) out of Valdez. A Class II overhead team, under incident commander Don Abbott, was dispatched and set up operations next door to the bird and sea otter cleaning station. The team quickly responded to requests for every-



BLM Alaska State Director Mike Penfold (r) and Trevor Swerdfager (c) from the Canadian Wildlife Service get an update on the movement of the oil slick at the Valdez Coast Guard Center from John Whitney, NOAA marine scientist. Photo by Dave Vickery.

ward was required to provide everything from information officers, to chartering boats, to providing ground and air transportation. A 24-hour command headquarters was established in Fairbanks, and additional resources of the Boise Interagency Fire Center were mobilized.

After initial review, the team was able to obtain several oil booms, plastic shields that float vertically in the ocean, cutting off oil from an adjacent area. The team also put crews in place protecting some vital areas of the park. By this point, the spill covered more than 1,500 square miles of Prince William Sound and was spreading into the Gulf of Alaska. Oil was reported at

thing from fuel to maps in support of state response efforts.

In addition to dealing with the demands for widespread logistical support, team members were faced with an army of local and national reporters and camera crews. Coordination through the RRT was necessary, and by the second week of the spill response, the U.S. Coast Guard was in overall control of operations out of Seward, as well as in Valdez.

As the huge effort gained momentum, virtually all federal agencies in Alaska were involved in some way. The Department's Office of Aircraft Services provided around-the-

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Secretary Lujan Talks with DOI Editors



Secretary Manuel Lujan talks with Department newsletter editors in his office.

...We have opportunities in the Department. And those opportunities are to do more than just be good stewards of the land. Good stewards of the whole heritage of this country is what it's all about.

--Manuel Lujan

Shortly after being confirmed by the Senate and sworn in by President Bush, Secretary of the Interior Manuel Lujan met briefly with editors of Departmental newsletters in his office in Washington, D.C., for an informal get-acquainted session.

He outlined four initiatives for the Department that go beyond managing resources of the Department. These initiatives include:

Education—Secretary Lujan believes in using the resources of the Department to promote such programs as the Cooperative Education, Stay-in-School, and other work-study programs, and providing Interior employees with educational opportunities.

Drugs—The Secretary strongly supports President Bush's War on Drugs initiative.

Recruiting women and minorities—The Secretary has stated that he has a strong commitment to recruiting and

providing opportunities for women and minorities in the Department.

Volunteers—Secretary Lujan has two goals for the volunteer initiative: (1) providing volunteer opportunities for the public and (2) encouraging Department employees to volunteer in their communities.

The following includes excerpts from his comments and a question and answer session with newsletter editors.

Lujan: I recognize that our first responsibility is good stewardship of the land, that we harvest those resources that God has given us, but we do it in a prudent manner, in an environmentally acceptable manner. We have those two mandates. The mandate of harvesting those resources and also the mandate of passing it on to whoever comes after us in better shape than we found it. So that's our first responsibility.

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Lujan Discusses Environmental Spirit (continued)

But along with that, we have opportunities in the Department. And those opportunities are to do more than just be good stewards of the land—good stewards, I guess, of the whole heritage of this country is what it's all about....

Q: When you spoke before all the employees when you first arrived, you sort of very modestly observed that you couldn't even see why they would want you here as Secretary because everything was running along just fine before you came. So I wonder, with that as a first statement, what kind of mark do you hope to make on this Department, or is that even a consideration?

Lujan: Oh yeah, I still think that if it remained in place just the way it was, that we could carry out the mission of this Department, which as I said, was good stewardship. We could have all these initiatives, all of those things could happen. What do I hope to accomplish? I hope to really, really accomplish those goals of doing my share of keeping kids in school, getting the 100,000th volunteer, and all of that. I hope to come up with some new initiatives of things that we can do—not just day-to-day things. One I'm working over in my mind is about what we can do about the

whole global change thing. We need some new bold initiatives—not just outlaw chlorofluorocarbons, not just do that. We have to do some dramatic things. It's a dangerous situation. I don't know yet what. I just kind of got some things going in my mind. I want to make a significant impact.

Q: Is there a great statesman or other person who you particularly admire or who you try to emulate in your life?

Lujan: No, I don't think so. I'm kind of a very even-keeled person. I try not to let my spirits go up too high or too low. I don't know who that would be in terms of...It would be nice to say Teddy Roosevelt, but I like to do things my own way, maybe Harry Truman. (laughing) No, there isn't anyone really, we're all different.

Q: Where did you get the drive then to enter public life and to continue on for many years as you have?

Lujan: It's not so many. (laughing). I'm very young. Well, I was always involved in politics. My dad, my mother were always involved. My dad was mayor of Santa Fe when I was growing up. He ran for

governor. He ran for Congress, as a matter of fact, but that was just kind of an exercise in futility, because in those years, in the 40s or 50s in New Mexico, as a Republican, you couldn't get elected to anything. But, you know, he put his name on the ballot to be a good party person. My mother was county clerk, so we always grew up with that.

Q: Recently the newspapers have been using the phrase, "a new environmental spirit." They talk about a new environmental spirit sweeping the country. Do you indeed perceive this, or do you perceive it as sort of the same old spirit in different words..., and if indeed you do think there is a new sense of environmentalism, how would you define that?

Lujan: Well, probably. I don't know one concise definition...but things are different today than they were 10, 15 years ago, maybe even 5 years ago. There's more of an awareness. I know in my case, and I'm sure that in each one of us, there's more of an awareness of saving this world for the future. There's a concern now that never existed before that we could, as a matter of fact, be extinct if we don't take certain steps now. Ten years ago you wouldn't have thought that.

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Washington Office

New BLM Employees

Daisy Sawicki, Secy., Ofc. of Ext. Affairs

Reassignments/Promotions

Richard Bird, Supv. Forester, Myrtlewood

RAO, to Forester, Div. of Forestry

Douglas Koza, Supv. Phys. Sci., California

SO, to Supv. Phys. Sci., Div. of Fluid Minerals

Ronald Hofman, Assoc. State Director,

California SO, to Spec. Asst. (IRM), AD,

Mgmt. Svcs.

Brenda Aldr, Geol., Div. of Minerals, to Asst.

Div. Chief, Div. of Solid Minerals

Steven Shafran, Envir. Sci., New Mexico SO,

to Ofc. of EEO

Pat Harvey, Policy Analyst, Energy & Mineral

Res., to Mgmt. Analyst, Div. of Mgmt.

Research

Hillary Oden, State Director, Wyoming SO, to

Asst. Director for Minerals

Roger Taylor, Area Mgr., Kingman RAO, to

Nat. Res. Spec., Div. of Lands & Realty

Janis Van Wyhe, Nat. Res. Spec., Div. of

Rights-of-Way, to Data Admin., LIS Prog.

Mgmt. Staff

Tony L. Ferguson, Geol., Worland DO to Div.

of Solid Minerals Oper.

Other Separations

John Carlson, Nat. Res. Spec., Div. of Solid

Minerals Leasing

David Evans, Org. Dev. Coord., Div. of Pers.

Arizona

New BLM Employees

Dean Weise, BOR, Grand Junction, CO, to

Land Surv., SO

Reassignments/Promotions

Mike Werner, Surf. Prot. Spec., Yuma DO, to

Appraiser, Phoenix DO

John Stephenson, Asst. District Mgr., Salt

Lake DO, to Supv. Nat. Res. Spec., SO

William Olver, Land Surv., WO, to Supv.

Land Surv., SO

VI Dille, Supv. Trng. Tech. to Supv. Admin.

Svcs. Spec., PTC

Retirements

Carmen Sanchez, Contract Spec., Safford DO

Peggy Avey, Pub. Affairs Spec., Arizona Strip

DO

Other Separations

Roland Loomis, Mining Engr., Safford DO

California

New BLM Employees

Ross W. Butler, Criminal Inv., SO

James V. Scrivner, Computer Prog. Analyst,

SO

Yvonne K. Laurie, Computer Spec.,

Bakersfield DO

William V. Clement, Supv. Cartog., SO

Roger O. Bruckner, Criminal Inv., SO/

Redding RAO

Robert W. Zickwolf, Supv. Land Surv., SO

Reassignments/Promotions

Denise P. Meridith, L&RR Prog. Mgr., New

Mexico SO, to Assoc. State Director, SO

Leroy M. Mohorich, Supv. Geol., Oregon SO,

to Mineral Res., SO

Jeffrey L. Jarvis, Outdoor Rec. Plnr.,

Shoshone DO to SO

Philip L. Damon, Outdoor Rec. Plnr. to Supv.

Outdoor Rec. Plnr., Needles RAO

Sharon M. Paris, BLM Ranger, Needles RAO

to Nat. Res. Spec., Barstow RAO

Ronald R. Fox, Supv. Pos. Class. Spec., WO,

to DSD Admin., SO

Larry D. Foreman, Nat. Res. Spec. to Wildlife

Mgmt. Bio., Riverside DO

Robert E. Van Dorean, Engr. Tech. to Civil

Engr. Tech., Riverside DO

Christopher M. Roholt, Outdoor Rec. Plnr.,

Miles City DO to Riverside DO

Mark H. Davis, Outdoor Rec. Plnr. to Supv.

Out. Rec. Plnr., Barstow RAO

Linda J. Hansen, Outdoor Rec. Plnr., Nevada

SO, to Plnr. & Envir. Coord., Ukiah DO

Leroy L. Delaney, Area Mgr., Surprise RAO

to Ridgecrest RAO

Duane A. Winters, Resource Mgmt. Spec.,

Palm Springs S. Coast RAO

Paul W. Brink, Area Mgr., Lewistown DO, to

Outdoor Rec. Plnr., SO

William T. Wiley, BLM Ranger to Supv. BLM

Ranger, Needles RAO

Other Separations

Claude O. Marsh, Supv. Range Tech.,

Bakersfield DO

Colorado

New BLM Employees

James Duval, Supv. Computer Spec., SO

Katherine Kitchell, Envir. Prot. Spec.,

Montrose DO

Thomas Vaughn, Interp. Spec., Montrose DO

Reassignments/Promotions

Stuart Cox, Civil Engr., WO, to Supv. Civil

Engr., SO

James Edwards, Mining Engr., Albuquerque

DO, to SO

Homer Gibson, Land Surv., SO

Gilbert Lucero, Admin. Officer, Wyoming SO

to SO

Martha Maxwell, Supv. Legal Tech. to Land

Law Exam., SO

Gary McFadden, Range Con., Worland DO,

to Nat. Res. Spec., Canon City DO

Harley Metz, Range Con., Salmon DO to

Grand Junction DO

Janis Shaw, Land Law Exam., Wyoming SO

to SO

Ronald Strong, Comm. Mgr., Montana SO to

SO

Gary Thrash, Realty Spec., Prineville DO, to

Envir. Analyst, Craig DO

Other Separations

Angelina Valverde, Land Law Exam., SO

Priscilla Mecham, Archaeologist, Craig DO

Eastern States Office

New BLM Employees

James Jackson, Pers. Mgmt. Spec.

Sandra Davis, Pers. Mgmt. Spec.

Paul Lankford, Jr., Pub. Affairs Spec.,

Jackson DO

Reassignments/Promotions

Terry Plummer, Dist. Mgr., Battle Mountain

DO, to Assoc. State Director, SO

Sharon Kipping, Biol. Tech., Div. of L&RR,

to Prog. Spec., SO

Kenneth Paur, Land Law Exam., Div. of

L&RR, SO

Corwyn Rodine, Land Surv. to GCDB Proj.

Mgr., Div. of Cadastral Surv., SO

John Reiss, Petro. Engr., Div. of Mineral Res.,

to Jackson DO

Idaho

Reassignments/Promotions

Michael C. Beaty, Resource Info. Sys. Tech.,

Boise DO, to Computer Spec., SO

Eva H. Teseo, Illustrator, SO

Roy S. Jackson, Area Mgr., Craig DO, to Dist.

Mgr., Salmon DO

Douglas A. Welman, Land Surv., SO

Sandra K. Courtney, Pers. Staff. Spec., SO, to

Admin. Officer, Idaho Falls DO

Roger L. Cada, Engr. Equip. Oper. Ldr., to

Engr. Equip. Oper. Foreman

Andoni Telleria, Engr. Equip. Oper.

Other Separations

Michael Austin, Realty Spec., Shoshone DO

Paul Dearstyne, Appraiser, SO

Monte L. McClendon, Envir. Prot. Spec.,

Boise DO

Montana

New BLM Employees

Barbara Owens, Equal Employ. Mgr., Ofc. of

State Director

Reassignment/Promotions

Robert Faithful, Alaska Prog. Mgr., WO, to

Assoc. State Director

Leonard Farnsworth, Maint. Worker, Div. of

Admin., to Range Tech., Big Dry RAO

Donna Geertz, Computer Prog. to Computer

Prog. Analyst, Div. of Admin.

Harlan Hayes, Forester, Div. of L&RR, to Div.

of Res. Mgmt.

Hubert Livingston, Range Con., Big Dry

RAO, to Nat. Res. Spec., Div. of L&RR

Clarence Pack, Nat. Res. Spec., Div. of L&RR,

to Supv. Nat. Res. Spec., Div. of Admin.

Paul Peek, Admin. Officer to Nat. Res. Spec.,

Butte DO

Gary Smith, Archaeologist, Div. of L&RR

Thomas Steger, Realty Spec. to Supv. Land

Use Spec., Div. of L&RR

Kurt Wurm, Land Surv., Div. of Ops.

Other Separations

Lawrence Thrasher, Geol., Div. of Mineral

Res.

Nevada

New BLM Employees

Candelario C. Nunez, Supv. Range Con., Shoshone-Eureka RAO
James W. Rogers, Criminal Inv., Las Vegas DO

Reassignments/Promotions

Mason K. Hall, Admin. Officer, Idaho Falls DO to Las Vegas DO
John S. Parrish, Supv. Land Surv., California SO to SO
Gary L. Ryan, Forester, WO, Div of Forestry, to Asst. Dist. Mgr., Las Vegas DO
Donn E. Siebert, Hydrol., Elko DO to Las Vegas DO
Stephen A. Weiss, Outdoor Rec. Plnr. to Forester, Walker RAO
Robert M. Wilson, Envir. Prot. Spec., WO, to Geol., Mineral Res., SO

Other Separations

Sarah E. Johnston, Archaeologist, Ely DO
James A. Mack, Land Surv., Div. of Ops., SO
Diana W. Stager, Range Con., Elko DO

New Mexico

New BLM Employees

James Alan Amos, Supv. Engr. Tech., BOR to Petro. Engr. Tech., Carlsbad RAO

Reassignments/Promotions

Dale L. Tunnell, Criminal Inv., Div of Ops., to Supv. Criminal Inv., Ofc. of SD
Roger A. Middleton, Petro. Engr. Tech., Wyoming SO to Tulsa DO
Mark L. Bush, Land Surv., Wyoming SO to Div. of Ops.
Tjin Huang, Petro. Engr., Worland DO to Tulsa DO
Richard W. Wilson, Geol., Albuquerque DO, to Electron. Tech., Div. of Admin.
James E. Straka, Geol. to Computer Prog. Analyst, Albuquerque DO
Dan D. Wood, Area Mgr., Taos RAO to Supv. Multi. Res. Spec., Rio Puerco RAO
Michelle Chavez, Supv. Prog. Analyst, Div. of Admin., to Area Mgr., Taos RAO
Stephen E. Filscher, Proj. Coord. to Supv. Multi. Res. Spec., Rio Puerco RAO
Jan C. Knight, Botanist to Nat. Res. Spec., Div. of Land & Renew. Res.
Katherine A. Thomas, Land Law Exam. to Supv. Contract Rep., Div. of Ops.
Donald L. Ashby, Range Con., Carlsbad RAO

Oregon

Reassignments/Promotions

Lewis L. Brush, Forester, Medford DO, to Supv. Nat. Res. Spec., Butte Falls RAO
Ralph M. Cornwall, Forester, Spokane DO to Border RAO
Kenneth M. Cunningham, Supv. Forester, Myrtlewood RAO to Tioga RAO
Steven D. Fowler, Supv. Forester, Tioga RAO to Myrtlewood RAO

Donald W. Meckley, Forester, Coast Range RAO, to Supv. Civil Engr Tech., South Valley RAO

Fabrun J. Holland, Equip. Oper. to Engr. Equip. Oper. Foreman, Medford DO
Catherine M. Humphrey, Geol., Worland DO, to Envir. Prot. Spec., Klamath Falls RAO
Howard J. Hunter, Forester, Butte Falls RAO, to Plans/Mon. Forester, Alsea RAO
Leland J. Johnson, Tech. Services Mgr. to Supv. Oper. Spec., Salem DO
Cheryl A. McCaffrey, Botanist, Burns DO to SO
James I. Pearce, Forestry Tech., Tioga RAO to Coos Bay DO

Other Separations

David R. Palmer, Computer Systems Analyst, SO
Steven J. Pischke, Forester, Ashland RAO
John E. Prendergast, Forester, Glendale RAO
Gerald R. Slaughter, Electron. Mech., Medford DO
William T. Supulski, II, Fuels Mgmt. Spec., Tillamook RAO
Robert A. Wright, Supv. Nat. Res. Spec., SO

Utah

New BLM Employees

Larry G. Sip, Realty Spec, Warm Springs RAO, Richfield DO
Everard J. Brudreaux Jr., Petro. Engr. Tech., Vernal DO

Retirements

Ester J. Wasden, Realty Spec., Cedar City DO

Other Separations

David G. Zalunardo, Wildlife Biol., Vernal DO
Leslie E. Dobson, Hydrol., Moab DO
Bryan B. Riley, Computer Spec., SO

Wyoming

New BLM Employees

John Menghini, Petro. Engr., Rawlins DO
David C. Moore, Petro. Engr., Great Divide RAO
Glen Coffman, Info. Systems. Mgr., SO
Bradley Blomquist, BLM Ranger, Casper DO
Teryl A. Shryack, Range Con., Great Divide RAO
Craig Bradley, Range Con., Great Divide RAO

Reassignments/Promotions

Michael Madrid, Petro. Engr., Rawlins DO to SO

Retirements

James S. Lambert, Appraiser, Wyoming SO

Boise Interagency Fire Center

New BLM Employees

Kenneth Shurtliff, Electron. Tech.
Carol Saras, Computer Prog.

Reassignments/Promotions

John Russell, Fire Mgmt. Spec., Service Ctr. to

Div. of Fire Mgmt.

Lee F. Englesby, Fire Mgmt. Spec., Winnemucca DO to Div. of Fire Mgmt.
Coyle Gaylord, Maint. Mech.

Service Center

New BLM Employees

Phillip Deuter, Computer Systems Analyst, Div. of Syst. Eng.
Larry Peck, Supv. Contract Spec., Div. of Admin. Svcs.
Joe Strong, Supv. Computer Spec., Div. of Syst. Eng.

Reassignments/Promotions

Bernard Cameron, Supv. Computer Systems Analyst to Supv. Computer Spec., Div. of Syst. Eng.
Timothy Geary, Land Surv., Colorado SO to Div. of Tech. Svcs.
Marvin Gutwein, Supv. Computer Analyst to Supv. Computer Spec., Div. of Syst. Eng.
Robert Henry, Admin. Officer, California SO, to Financ. Syst. Analyst, Div. of Finance
Robert Leopold, Proj. Dev. Spec. to Data Syst. Manager, Div. of Data Mgmt.
Marilyn Myers, Supv. Carto., Div. of Tech. Svcs. to Supv. Carto., Div. of Data Mgmt.
John Reltsma, Carto., Div. of Tech. Svcs., to Computer Syst. Analyst, Div. of Syst. Eng.
Norma Reltsma, Computer Asst. to Computer Programmer, Div. of Data Mgmt.
William Twenhofel, Land Surv., Alaska SO to Div. of Data Mgmt.
Melinda Walker, Carto., Div. of Tech. Svcs. to Div. of Data Mgmt.
Robert Woerner, Tech. Pub. Ed. to Writer-Editor, Div. of Data Mgmt.

Other Separations

Linda Farley, Supv. Oper. Acct., Div. of Finance
Dorothy Ortiz, Fac. Maint. Spec., Div. of Admin. Svcs.
Linda Waring-Wilson, Supv. Contr. Spec., Div. of Admin. Svcs.

Tracking Personnel is compiled from information submitted by State Office Personnel Branches to the Service Center in Denver by the 15th of every other month. The next deadline for June/July submissions to the SC is May 15. If an office is not listed here, the submission was not received in the Service Center by the deadline. Submissions should be made through the electronic mail system to YA530.

Montanan receives fire safety award

Quick Action Saves Life on Fireline

The summer of '88 was, for firefighters, seemingly endless—one of bone-tiring days and nights, of sweltering sun, smoky, smudged yellow shirts and green pants, worn boots, aching and blistered feet. There was dust, wind, smoke and danger—and heros.

Chuck Otto, area manager at the Judith Resource Area Office at the Lewistown District in Montana, was one such hero. He was recently honored with the BLM's Jerry Mauk Memorial award for special achievement in fire safety.

He's worked fires for 12 years. Last year, he got a particularly early start the first week in June when a fire started near a campground on the Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation in southern Montana. It was called the Early Bird fire. Otto was assigned as a safety officer.

It was his job to ensure that federal firefighters and managers followed safe procedures, that they had proper tools, fire-resistant clothes, called Nomex, fire shelters and escape routes identified in case the fire behaved unexpectedly.

Conditions were critical, especially for such an early fire. Humidity was extremely low, winds were erratic, temperatures during the day sometimes



Chuck Otto, center, receives the Jerry Mauk Memorial Award from Washington Office Safety Officer Paul Lynch and the head of Fire and Aviation Management Lee Barkow.

topped 100.

On June 6, Otto had the 12-hour night shift. He accompanied crews to their assignments to discuss the night's duties, escape routes, and fire behavior.

When he arrived, Rosebud County employees, under the supervision of a county commissioner, were also out fighting the fire. He saw that the county crew didn't have Nomex clothes or fire shelters and offered to return to the fire camp to pick up enough for the county crews. The supervisors and crew were grateful.

While heading south on his way back to camp in a pickup, he noticed that the wind shifted ominously. What had been slow creeping flames, burst to the tops of the ponderosa pines, crowning and blocking his

passage. Knowing that some crews had passed that way several minutes earlier, he immediately radioed their crew bosses to make sure they were safe. He also called his supervisor to tell him about the fire's erratic behavior. Along the perimeter, the fire was spreading about 40 yards a minute with flames as high as 100 feet.

Although Otto was well aware of the immediate danger, he also knew his job now was to make sure everyone was out of the area. Otto returned to the evening's initial meeting place and found three Bureau of Indian Affairs crews. He told them to evacuate following another safety route north. He double-checked with the crews

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Veteran firefighter risks life to save another (Continued)

on the radio and found that they had all moved through the northern safety route to secure areas.

"After they left, I made a quick last-minute circuit of the area and was leaving," he said. He called his supervisor and told him everyone was abandoning the area. He took one last look down the cleared fireline and was surprised to spot a lone bulldozer coming up the line, stopping here and there to push the fireline out. The man wasn't wearing Nomex clothes and had no radio or fire shelter.

"I got out of the truck and ran to him," Otto said. "I told him that the fire was coming and told him to follow the road north to get out."

Otto made one last sweep of the area. Everyone was in a safe area except him and the bulldozer operator. He radioed his supervisor and informed him they would be making their way out along the north safety route.

He followed the dozer north to the end of the ridge, where the dozer operator stopped.

"Several yards ahead was a wall of smoke and flame that had crossed the ridge," he said. "The flames were headed northeast very fast. . . . A few seconds later the fire jumped the catline to the west and south of our location." Otto heard on the radio that a crew in another nearby area was abandoning the



Smoke billows over Lame Deer, Montana, as last year's Early Bird fire grows.

fireline and escaping to the west. Otto knew they were trapped.

"I could see and hear the fire coming toward us," Otto said. The pair moved into a nearby meadow and Otto had the man clear away the grass and debris with his bulldozer, leaving only bare soil and robbing the fire of fuel.

"As the fire topped the ridge, it crowned through the trees, creating immense fire whorls

which went up 60-70 feet in the air and then dipped back down, almost touching the ground around us," Otto said. "There was a great roaring sound, and hot embers began to fall all around us."

Otto knew that he was going to have to deploy his fire shelter. It was made for one, but it would have to do.

Using the dozer as

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Interagency Cooperation Bright Spot In Nation's Worst Oil Spill

(Continued from p. 3)

clock support for aircraft use to transport people and equipment. BLM was asked for assistance in setting up remote weather stations around Prince William Sound and along the Kenai Peninsula by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Agency.

By April 8, the oil was pushed by wind and currents into Resurrection Bay, Harris Bay and Aialik Bay in the park. Rugged Island and the Chiswell Islands, part of the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge, were also affected.

Changing wind and currents by April 9 indicated there could be a threat of the oil moving around the southern tip of the Kenai Peninsula and possibly moving into lower Cook Inlet and Kachemak Bay. By this point, the slick was spread over 2,600 square miles of ocean. Additional boom was arriving in Seward and Coast Guard cutters were dispatched there.

To deal with the threat of oil moving into Cook Inlet, the incident command set up two subordinate offices, one in Kenai and one in Homer. Resource assessment and identification of vital areas was again undertaken

and plans made to boom off areas containing fish hatcheries and key salmon spawning streams.

The damage to natural resources from this disaster is already massive and it is likely to continue to mount. Developing

been expanding and more equipment and people have been mobilized from the Coast Guard, Exxon and the military. BLM resources were stretched to the limit during the initial two weeks of the spill, but they have been vital in providing the quick and necessary help needed by various Interior agencies.

The most evident and most positive note has been the extraordinary cooperation and support among DOI agencies, as well as other agencies. The ongoing response

shown by BLM and DOI employees in the face of an unprecedented demand caused by this tragic event has been a shining example of professionalism and dedication to duty. It will take years before the final chapter of this disaster is written, but the reaction of the Interior Department will be one of the bright spots.

The damage to natural resources from this disaster is already massive and it is likely to continue to mount.

an assessment of the full range of environmental consequences may take years.

As this article goes to press, the coordinated response effort remains in full swing. Tide and wind action on the slick in the Gulf of Alaska are weathering the oil, changing its consistency, and breaking it up into long stringers of "mousse." Oiled birds and marine mammals have started showing up near Kenai Fjords National Park, and the communities of the lower Kenai Peninsula and Kodiak Island are working together to meet potential threats.

Demands on BLM have slowed as the response effort has

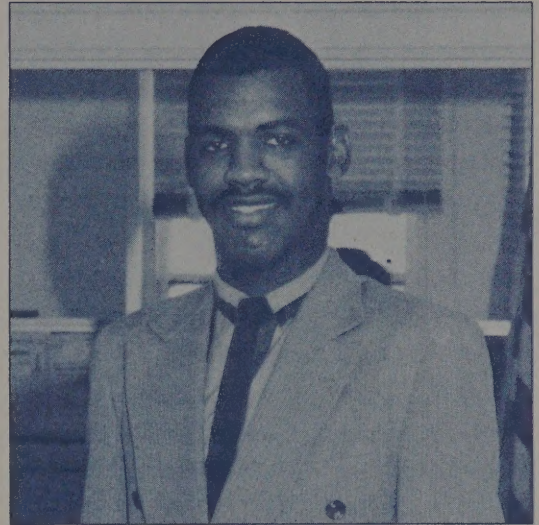
BLM Around the Country

Student Completes Major Task for BLM

John Marcel, Jr., student from Washington, D.C.'s, Gallaudet University for the hearing impaired, has taken some time off from his studies to work for the BLM. Marcel is a clerk (typing) on detail to the Washington Office Division of Public Affairs from the Office of Equal Employment Opportunity. He is working on the Bureau's photographic system--cataloging and archiving a 20-year backlog of work. Marcel, a Texas native, is majoring in child development. The Bureau has a successful relationship with Gallaudet in employing students and conducting outreach activities at the university.

GCDB Launches Data Collection Effort

Business people from as far away as the East Coast and Alaska gathered at the Service Center in early March to learn more about a Geographic Coordinate Data Base data collection contract. The meeting was designed to familiarize prospective offerors with the solicitation and to answer questions. An onsite visit for more than 100 contractors was conducted the following week in Santa Fe and Anchorage. It is anticipated that the contract will be awarded by August 15.



John Marcel

Firefighter Honored with Mauk Award

(Continued from p. 9)

protection, Otto deployed the shelter behind it. He told the dozer operator that two of them would fit just fine in the shelter and to keep the corners down and his face near the soil surface so he could breathe.

"The shelter was now being pounded by intense winds," Otto said. "We could see a bright orange glow outside where the shelter didn't touch the ground completely. A few sparks were coming through these cracks, so I quickly sealed them off. How long we were under the shelter, I don't know,

as I didn't have a watch with me. However, I estimate it to be 3-5 minutes; possibly as long as 8-10 minutes.

"I remember how effectively the shelter kept out the blast of heat as we climbed under it, how cool the soil surface felt that we were lying on. . ."

After several minutes, Otto got out of the shelter to find the dozer and the pickup safe. "Everything around us was smoky, black and glowing. The fire had passed to the northeast and could still be seen moving in that direction. We waited there 20-30 minutes for the

flames to die down around us.

"I introduced myself to Marvin," (Marvin Quinlen, Rosebud County Road Crew), "I told him he had built an excellent pad. Marvin asked about the fire shelter and was amazed at how well it worked. So was I."

Otto eschews the title "hero." "It wasn't that at all, it was part of the job," he said. When asked if he was ready to go back this year, he said, "You bet!"

Wildfire activity has reached record levels the last few

years. So far, in 1989, there have been major fires in Texas and New Mexico, and the drought continues, particularly in the Pacific Northwest.

The Jerry Mauk Memorial award was established in 1987, and is in honor of Mauk, former chief of the division of fire and aviation management. The first recipient was "all BLM firefighters," for outstanding safety in the 1987 fire season. Chuck Otto is the second recipient.

Lujan Meets with Newsletter Editors (Continued from p 4)

You would have thought you could go on doing whatever you wanted to do, burning whatever you wanted to burn, and not pay the consequences. But now we know. What we went through last summer, with all the heat and seeing glaciers beginning to melt in an alarming way... so there is that awareness, and I feel it personally. I know that I cannot take any action without studying the environmental consequences.

Q: About a year ago, Bureau of Reclamation moved the bulk of its staff to Denver. Do you plan on continuing decentralization of Bureaus or agencies whose major constituencies are out West?

Lujan: I would like to do that. I would like to see, for example, the Territories, I don't quite know how, have more personnel in the Territories than in a central office. How, I don't know. I can't tell you that, but I would like to see that decentralization take place. The Bureau of Land Management... and at this moment I'm not making a wholesale recommendation that we do like we did with the Bureau of Reclamation, however, the constituency is out there. It really makes a lot more sense to have the bulk of

the operation there than here. Probably the same with the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Now, you know, I'm just saying that in answer to your question. How we do it requires a lot of studies, but I'm just saying that it makes a lot of sense that you be where your constituency is. That's a basic Republican philosophical view, that the decisions are made as close to the people as possible. I guess that's why you've seen this shift in this Department towards decentralization and towards moving. That's why the Bureau Reclamation was moved over there.

Q: What do you see as the future for offshore leasing at this point?

Lujan: Well, every time I talk to someone about that sort of thing, depending what their view is, they come to me and say, "we don't want you to drill here." I always say, "Don't just tell me you don't want me to

drill here. Tell me it's all right to drill here, but not here." Let's do it selectively. Don't just give me the line that there's no drilling in the Outer Continental Shelf. This is very important to us, that we have an OCS drilling program because of our balance of payment with oil, our national security. I'm not saying go punch holes everywhere without us knowing what we're doing, but recover those resources and, just like everything else, in an environmentally sound manner.

Editor's note: This interview took place before the oil spill in Alaska. Additional interviews with the Secretary are planned.

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Inside Track

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